



Adapt Parenting as Children Age



From the minute our child enters this world, they begin growing right in front of our eyes. As our children enter each new stage, we must adapt our parenting skills in order to meet each child's needs and to accommodate their new needs, personality traits, and challenges. Our parenting techniques will change, but our consistency and love should always remain.

We must strive to be parents who listen, respect, and trust our children. We must find the balance between guidance and hovering, and we must guard our expectations at every stage. Asking the Lord to set our standards and expectations is the right first step. Scripture, prayer, and friends who have walked through the trials of parenting will help bring success to our own parenting journey.

Our first role as a parent is that of a nurturer. We begin by meeting every need and providing care for a completely dependent child. It is during this stage when we form a bond with our child and the parent-child attachment is made.

As children move into the toddler stage, parents begin to establish boundaries. This is the stage when parents discuss what rules are, how they are set, when they are enforced, and what the consequences are when a rule is broken. Rules at this stage are most often rules for safety and guidance toward age-appropriate independence.

When our children head off to school, a new set of challenges are presented. Our focus as parents becomes helping our children develop healthy social skills as they learn to interact with their peers. We learn to guide them through social situations and protect them from outside influences. We must answer their questions with honesty and begin instilling Biblical values.

Adolescence is possibly the hardest stage and parental transition. It is a time when we learn to balance the increased freedom and required obedience of our children. As we observe drastic changes in our child's behavior and emotions, we must continue to provide love, consistency, and an increased amount of grace. We must clarify our standards and expectations and communicate intentionally, respectfully, and openly. We must continue to set limits and offer guidance



as we attempt to field new problems and hard questions. It is *absolutely* normal to feel unprepared and inexperienced. We must recognize this stage as the beginning of the gradual process of separation.

Late adolescence and early adulthood is a time when we complete our child's preparation for departure. We must help our child as they establish new routines and habits. New family traditions tend to develop during this season as your child takes on the role of an adult and the responsibilities that accompany this role. Parents begin to loosen their control while continuing to provide care, availability, help, and acceptance.

Parenting often feels like a circus act as we balance priorities, juggle responsibilities, and learn as we go. Here are a few parenting practices that remain in each stage and season.

Be available. Practice listening to your child early on. Ensure them of your love and make it known they can come to you anytime in any situation.

Encourage. Remind your child of their worth in Christ. Be their biggest cheerleader through every challenge and success.

Communicate. Solid communication is the foundation of every relationship. Be intentional and honest in your conversations with your children. Be open to share and available to listen.

Watch and listen. Observe your child. Really get to know them by watching their behaviors and listening to their interactions. Knowing who they are will benefit you in understanding how they react and respond.